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CARTER ASSERTS U.S. IS ABLE TO MONITOR TREATY WITH SOVIET

FEARS ALTERNATIVE TO PACT

By MARTIN TOLCHIN

President Carter declared unequivocally yesterday that the United States could verify Soviet compliance with a strategic arms limitation treaty from the day it was signed, and warned that the alternative to the treaty was "a dark nightmare of unrestrained arms competition."

In his first major address devoted solely to the treaty, the opening salvo in what is expected to be months of intense debate, the President presented a comprehensive description of the bipartisan history of the treaty, which he said was "now nearly complete," and discussed at length the moral and strategic consequences of both acceptance and rejection.

Rejection of an arms treaty, the President said, "would mean a radical turning away from America's long-term policy of seeking peace."

Sees a Step Toward Peace

"We would no longer be identified as a peaceloving nation," Mr. Carter said at a luncheon meeting of the annual convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

An audience of about 1,200 sat in silence and listened intently as Mr. Carter spoke of Trident and Minuteman missiles, photoreconnaissance and the superiority of mobile to fixed-site missiles.

The President emphasized that the treaty was seen not as a panacea but as a step toward peace.

Choice of Imperfect Worlds

"That is the choice we face," he said, "between an imperfect world with SALT II and an imperfect and more dangerous world without it."

The President sought to seize the initiative from Senate critics who have contended that the loss of Iranian monitoring stations has made Soviet compliance with the treaty virtually unverifiable. Last week, Defense Secretary Harold Brown sought to allay this criticism by declaring that regaining the intelligence capability needed to verify compliance

"will take about a year, depending on how fast we can carry out monitoring programs under development." Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, had previously said at a closed session of the Senate Intelligence Committee that it would take three or four years to make up the loss of the Iranian listening posts.

President Carter told the publishers that "the treaty must, and will be, verifiable from the first day it is signed."

The stakes were too high, President Carter said, to rely on trust, or even on the rational inclination of the Russians to act in their own best interest.

The President noted that United States verification capabilities included photographic satellites and other surveillance systems. He said that nuclear submarines took several years to build, and that missile silos and their supporting equipment were large and visible. Intercontinental bombers were built at a few plants and needed major airfields, he said, noting that American photoreconnaissance satellites regularly surveyed the entire Soviet Union and were certain to observe any Soviet infractions.

Undertake New Initiatives

"We are confident that no significant violation of the treaty could take place without the United States detecting it," Mr. Carter said.

Ultimately, however, the President returned to the "trust me" philosophy of his campaign, and said that sensitive intelligence techniques "obviously cannot be disclosed in public."

The President said that an arms treaty would enable the United States to undertake new strategic initiatives. He noted that fixed-site missiles had become increasingly vulnerable to surprise attack, and said that the Russians had three-quarters of their missiles in such sites, compared to one-quarter of American missiles.

The Defense Department was studying a number of options to remedy this problem, the President said, including making some ICBM's mobile.

"I might add that the options we are evaluating would be far more costly," Mr. Carter said, "and we would have far less confidence in their effectiveness, in the absence of SALT II limits. For with-

out these limits on Soviet warheads, the Soviet Union could counter our efforts simply by greatly increasing the number of warheads on their missiles."

"Let me emphasize that the SALT II agreement preserves adequate flexibility for the United States in this important area," he added.

'Strongest Nation on Earth'

The President stressed that the United States approached arms control "as the strongest nation on earth, politically, economically and militarily."

Stressing the bipartisan nature of the quest for a limitation on strategic weapons, the President said that "every President since the dawn of the nuclear age has pursued the effort to bring nuclear arms under control."

He cited the efforts of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford, all of whom, he said, had materially contributed to arms limitation. "Three Presidents," Mr. Carter added, "have spent more than six years negotiating the next step in this process, the SALT II agreement."

The President warned that it was "a delusion" to believe that rejection of the treaty would lead the Russians to exercise restraint. The effect might be just the opposite, he said, because the most intransigent and hostile elements in the Soviet Union would be encouraged and strengthened.

Turner's Comments to Congress

The President said the United States would not try to impose linkage between Soviet behavior and the treaty. "SALT II is not a favor we are doing for the Soviet Union," he said. "It is an agreement carefully negotiated in the national security interest of the United States."

In an allusion to Admiral Turner's testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, which was leaked to journalists, the President pledged to share "some of our most sensitive defense and intelligence secrets" with Congress during the treaty debate.

"The leaders in Congress must insure that these secrets will be guarded carefully so that the debate itself does not undermine our security," the President said.

In the final analysis, the President said, the United States faced a moral and political decision.